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مؤسسة عبدالحميدسشومان

Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Darat al Funūn

Marwan paints images of human beings, very subjective images, never individual portraits. The person portrayed is always exemplary, unique and anonymous all at once. Such images are Marwan's diary, brief notations of his personal moods. They are portrayals of personality resulting from an extremely physical artistic process and they reflect the painter's conflict with the world. While they reveal a crisis of identity, they also expose its contrary: an identity with consciousness and feelings, an identity with the world. Marwan's paintings question life and ego, touch upon the secret, and circle about it reflecting it. Emerging in his paintings as a vision as a "face" - the secret, disappearing, proclaims itself, vanishes. There to be seen, it again withdraws.

Marwan is a kind of hedonist. Reality ist experienced and assimilated in a wholly senuous way, in self-exposure. By losing himself to the world he suffers his own vulnerbility. At the same time, a great deal of joy is present via apparent trivialities – tiny emotional experiences open to feelings of profound happiness.

Since Marwan is a painter whose work develops

step by step, his work from the past the years can be viewed thematically as well as creatively. In the early "figures and couples" (1966-1970), Marwan represents the spiritual dramas of individuals with a remote coolness combined with a lyrical feeling in such a way that the viewer feels a tranquil melancholy. The nervous strain and tension in these figures reflect our inner lives their extreme isolation along with their often emphasized pointing hands monumentalizes spiritual loneliness. These figures are full urgent yearning for another human being, and at the limits of such yearning they seem to desire to be other persons, to be transfigured. While their yearning often contorts itself into signs of sexual desire, it remains fixed in an aggressive sign language instead of in abandonment or commitment. Gesturing under severe pressure, cramped in their aggression these figures are tortured and obsessed by their longing to overcome their torment.

In the "veil paintings" (1970–1973), the motif of the shawl is used to shape a more thorough and exact handling of color and space. Moreover, the shawl gives a more specific definition to the formerly

obsessive though vague psychological content. It conceals, thus reveals, offers insight. Like a kind of bandaging it protects and hides, evoking a sence of resistance and inaccessibility. But combined with the pride one feels associated with such veiling, there is also modesty and shame; the shawl not only conceals – it exposes. Mysteriously, it tenders promises. Through delicate, clayey treatment of the surface, light and shadow are shown by the flickering shading of the paint. In this way, the transfixed, concentrated stress and tension become visible.

These early canvases are done in classical oil painting which favors a tone-to-tone style over a strong, colorful one. Instead of fresh, loud complementary colors, a limited palette of four or five colors is used. Blended in various ways, painted over in subdued glazings, the figures always remain on the very surface itself. Illusionistic perspectives are never used, not even when suggested by the subject matter. The surface is composed with exact, linear outlines which, in spite of contrasting color areas, become transitions because of the described blending. In this way, the various parts keep within the overall concept on an entirely abstract level - independent of the theme. The color values alone develop undulating, wrinkled areas by the juxtaposition of their independent, three-dimensional qualities. The color belongs exclusively to the surface of the painting, taking place only there. The sought-after distortion, stress and contraction of the figures is not supported by any means independent of the painting - which would make the work manneristic - but conforms entirely to the creative medium. The mode of expression is identical to the artistic procedure.

In coming to terms with the surface, the attitude of the line drawing remains decisive for the layout of a painting. The surface areas also elucidate the experience of the figures: sometimes these areas are strangely full of suspense - for the amorphous, thickly woven backgrounds are actually, imaginatively seen, not backgrounds but surroundings. This explains why the isolation of the figures can be experienced so keenly, almost painfully, as loneliness. For emptiness which surrounds them is a dense, oppressive one. It is not merely artificial space, but a coexistence within the painting, limiting and restricting the figures. One accepts the fragmentation of these human beings because it is identical with the artistic means and therefore directs one's interpretation, releasing it from speculation. Emptiness is the oppressor, cutting down these figures, crippling them, reducing them to egos, locking them in a tension which they seem to tolerate under the pressure of their own silence, Only through severe straining, through exaggerated, frozen signs and gestures, is this lack of communication even dented. When it is, when it starts to give, we are confronted with fundamental questions about human beings.

The "facial landscapes", from the beginning of the 70s, show faces which are broadly unfolded onto the surfaces and frequently cut into by the sides of the painting – that is, again, they are fragmented. The curvature of the head describes a gentle arch like the horizon of a wide landscape. By connecting different visual angles to various parts, the face is distortedly stretched over the surface. The view from below and the steep foreshortening correspond without interruption to the frontal view and the curved forward side views. Several perspectives, therefore,

coincide; movement and time are integrated in the stasis of the painting and simply by looking at the object in this way, a backward and forward movement occurs. This movement belongs exclusively to the painting's own pulsating, abstract temenos. A foreshortened forehead leads, on one hand, into the far depths of the painting, but at the same time remains part of the face shown in frontal position, parallel and penetratingly close to the viewer. It is this penetrating oblique closeness which gives an illusion of immense size to these canvases. The face spills beyond the frame, expanding off its own vision, enveloping us. We can immerse ourselves in it, for having become small, we can stroll in its hills, ravines, plains and abysses. The "brow" appears darkened by clouds, the "cheeks" as though lit up by the sun. Even the gaze, which is peacefully, openly, questioningly directed at us, invites us to step inside. The plasticity of these faces resides in color cracks, color traces, color folds winding themselves together. Dense and loose areas, constructed with brief strokes and winding lines, alternate as elevations over the clayey color zones and are bushily cut up. In the pulsating, hovering interplay of color values, the various parts of the face are shifted towards each other with a circular motion. Again, it is not just the often fractured perspectives, but the color and its presentation which breaks up the face, transforming in into those qualities evoked by the word "landscape". Such in turn corresponds to the warm, earthy atmosphere of gold, red, brown, yellow and pink tones, with little blue and little white.

Now as in the past, the painting – not naturalistic-illusionistic perspective – de termines the themes. Curving lines, quick brushstrokes, in

fact almost blows of pure color, are now placed more freely, more confidently and more energetically as elevations. The lines can no longer be interpreted as the graphic portrayal of a theme, but as the presentation of light. Color is employed, independent of representation, as an autonomous means of expression. Thus any representational reproach is destroyed at the outset, or at least rendered more than ever secondary. More and more a vision of color and light overcome the toned-down, clayey effects in Marwan's paintings. The graphic framework is still there and, as in earlier works, the linear-constructed compositions are still largely woven together by graduated color. But something new is happening: a breakthrough into pure color, a greater vivacity, and a more complex range of personal characteristics.

In the subsequent paintings, from 1973, the problem of clearing the painting towards pure color is consistently confronted. In these canvases, we no longer come across gradation of space, but, rather, an interlocking of areas in which plasticity takes place as color event. As a result, a brighter coloration overwhelms the tone-to tone process. Alongside the glazed method, in which colors are transparently mixed with each other, a spontaneous, flickering "handwriting" becomes more and more dominant, covering the canvas, guided not by the object but by light in a sensitively animated net of dots, swirls and lines.

1973 was a year of electric development for Marwan, a breakthrough which had probably been seething for a long time. In 1973 his work blossomed, the flower of a free and independent painting culture, into which he introduced his accumulated knowledge of abstract expres-

sionism and tachisme.

The watercolor "head" from 1973 is a precious incunabula for this breakthrough. Clayey, very delicate colors which run into each other are still applied thinly to the paper, but they are no longer toned down. They ar mainly pure colors, presented in varying intensities, which occasionally run and fuse but which are primarily dabs, licks, splashes and curlicues fleetingly jotted down, autonomously presented, above all expressive within themselves. They no longer depict the face as object, but execute it as a recital of color and light. Areas of paper which have been left white elevate the light and, as negative shapes developed between brushstrokes, are expressive as the colors themselves. The face, in this way lit up and shone through, becomes a transparent, fleeting image, flowing in the transition of colors which no longer occur through blending but through the intercourse of the surface fragments. Severe, controlled shapes are broken up into colors which fuse in their dabs and lines only to immediately disperse. The clump, entangle, knot up, then stagger apart. At the same time the radiance is pregnant with darkness and concealment; the light, joyful and feverish over its miraculous birth, half-hides and half-reveals the chaos within.

Tremendous concentration and confidence are behind this fleeting appearance of a face which seems to be disappearing in the very act of becoming visible.

The qualities described in the watercolor are rendered on canvas in tempera-painting; its mixture of oils, water and egg, which quickly dries, allows a dynamic, handwritten application of paint.

In many of the large "head" paintings, done in

1973 and after, there occur ecstatic battles of color – twining masses of ribbons, strokes and dots, done in intoxicated, twiching brushwork. Interwoven colors determine the three-dimensional shuttlelike motion in the loom of the painting. Nothing more is to be seen of perspective, not even by way of allusion. The painting becomes a color-space fabric of pure movement, which seems to leave the single blows of color in place only for a moment, as if the light were constantly changing, producing an effect of shimmering transparence.

As viewers, we are experiencing the result of an extremely physical painting process, in which Marwan occasionally paints with the balls of his thumbs and his fingers in an ecstacy comparable in its intensity to an orgasm. The act of painting is experienced full of exploding, exciting zest like a dance into which one flings oneself with hallucinated abandon: a flight of all the senses in which Marwan existentially includes himself. In these paintings, happiness coexists with terror and in the heat of momentary unification life teems with death. Realistic form is completely destroyed; form here is a pure event of color and light while a ripe sensuosity clings to the "face" become a grid, optimistic with dread, anxious with tenderness, suffering its knowledge of redemption.

The mostly very similar faces, which seem to be the same when looked at separately, are always different if one looks closer, because they are inner faces depicting mental conditions always in flux. Marwan almost always paints himself, although physically there is little facial resemblance – yet they are self-portraits from the viewpoint of inner truth because they are psychic profiles of himself. Furthermore, they are pre-

cisely subjective because they are unique, exemplary and universal in their anonymity. Images of the specific, they enter our lives.

It is especially in these paintings that Marwan comes closest to the "écriture automatique" developed by the surrealists for recording the unknown of the inner life. In these ecstatic paintings, Marwan finds again and again images of the human being with his secret: that of life. In looking at such images we do not simply gain insight into the inner life of an individual. We enter with all our senses, indulging in a land-scape of inner lives in which we recognize ourselves.

In the paintings done since 1974, color and movement have been liberated in a way which two years before seemed inconceivable. We must view this development as Marwan's continuing unpacking of the human image. In post-1974 heads he has moved closer and closer to the face. If the heads were cut off by the canvad edges before, now the paintings often show the face as a segment: the eyes and mouth frequently touch the edge of the canvas. The overproportions of the soul portrayed literally burst the painting's frame. Such greater closeness to the object is accompanied by an even more extensive disintegration in the handling of color. Nothing is abandoned of the apparently confusing spontaneity in the use of color with regard to the contents; rather, it is carried on even further. And yet it is especially these paintings which radiate an enormous meditative peacefulness, yoking in vision the "vita activa" with the "vita contemplativa". If one engages them in persistent, patient dialogue, it becomes evident that the face only slowly emerged out of the abstract mass of color in apparent contrast

to the fast method of painting. And since it only does emerge for a moment, the act is experienced as a flashing realization invaded by the fact that the face is already receding gently into the whirlpool of color. If one comes across a painting which one has seen previously, a face may appear with a completely different expression. Where before a perhaps gentle, melancholy look reached us, we now are confronted with a seriously critical, sometimes mocking gaze in the very same painting. Then again we might also come across a knowing and at the same time unquestioning cheerfuness which we perhaps do not even bear within us, but which may be a precious memory. This multitude of faces only reaches a physical solidity from a considerable distance, as if we could only get hold of them if we were nearer. But when we do move closer to them, these faces almost disappear, manifesting themselves only in the fragments our memory retains of them from the previous distance. Such shifting planes of distance and perspective cause us to introject these faces; we step into them as they step out of us and what we learn about ourselves through them seems to remain with them.

Marwan is obsessed by faces because for him they are a means of expressing the dramatic depth of life. I do not know any artist anywhere who to such an extent has adopted the head, the monumentalized head, as practically his only theme, in which the world can be laid bare and last questuion put into painting. It is understandable, given our age, that Marwan does not indicate any ideals. He reveals conditions and experiences. It is important to keep in mind that in his paintings human beings are never presented whole — they are always fragmentarily corresponding to

the symbolics of concealment or of emptiness. But this fragmentation is also the formal analogy to the forementioned visionary qualities: the slightly opened veils, for example, contain textures of unveiling, revelation, exposure, search for truth and discovery. In recent paintings, where darkness partially conceals the faces, a light not only illuminates them, but contains in itself the image of enlightenment.

The fact that last questions are posed that last answers are not attempted, confirms the honesty of Marwan's art.

Engaged, humanistic, believing in life and in the human being, Marwan's paintings are also aware of our weaknesses, helplessness, instability and our hopes. Through such participation in and identification with human suffering, Marwan's abstract sieges of color do not remain detached, aesthetic, consumptional ecstasies, but reflect through a commitment that is essentially artistic, dramas of the single individual's inner life.

Jörn Merkert





#### PRINCIPLE PERSONAL EXHIBITIONS:

### Marwan

# The Collection of his works obtained by Museums and official Association:

- National museum Berlin.
- Kupferstichkabinett Berlin.
- Gallery Berlin Berlin.
- Exhibition Hall Berlin.
- Graphic collection Coburg.
- Bayerishe stadtsgemäldesammlungen -Münich.
- Kestner Museum Hanovre.
- National Graphic collection -Münich.
- Museum of wolfsburg city.
- Carnegie institute Pittsburg.
- National Museum Damascus.
- Bibliotheque National Paris.
- Seita museum Paris.
- Exhibition Hall Manheim.
- Artistic's collection of the Republic of Germany - Bonn
- Istitute of the Arabic worlds museum - Paris.
- Museum of history of Art and Culture at Lubeck.

- 1967 Springer Gallery, Berlin.
- 1969 Dr. Ammon's Private Gallery, Berlin.
- 1970 Cultural Centre of Damascus.
- 1971 Lietzow Gallery, Berlin. Medici Gallery, Munich.
- 1972 Lietzow Gallery, Berlin.
  Negedank Private Gallery,
  Trier. Dr. Tscheuschner's
  Gallery Wuppertal.
- 1973 Lietzow Gallery, Berlin. Art 4'73 of Bale Pudelko Gallery, Bonn.
- 1974 Dr. Kaulen's Private Gallery,Hanovre.Lietzow Gallery, Berlin.
- 1975 Buchholz Gallery, Munich.
- 1976 Gruenebaum Gallery, New York. Lietzow Gallery, Berlin. The new artistic union of Berlin. A retrospective exhibition in Charlottenbourg palace, Berlin.
- 1977 Kunstschau Gallery, Bremen.
  Pudelko Gallery, Bonn.
  Graphics section at Kari friebe,
  Darmstadt. Kunstforum Gallery,
  Rottweil.
- 1978 Lietzow Gallery, Berlin.
- 1980 Musuem of Modern Art, Bagdad. Lietzow Gallery, Berlin. Marin Gallery, Hagen.
- 1981 Documenta-Archiv, Kassel.
- 1982 Biennale of Venice. Hartwig & Bethke Gallery, Berlin. Timm Gierig, Frankfort.
- 1983 Overbeck, Lubeck. Metta Linde Gallery, Lubeck. Lietzow Gallery, Berlin.
- 1984 Exhibitions Hall, Darmstadt.
  Joachim Becker Gallery,
  Cannes. FIAC '85, Paris
- 1985 Joachim Becker Gallery, Cannes. Lietzow Gallery, Berlin. Ketterer Gallery, Munich.

- 1986 Timm Gierig Gallery, Frankfort.Baumgarten Gallery, Fribourg.R. Studio, Mannheim.
- 1987 Springer Gallery, Berlin Joachim Becker Gallery, Cannes. Michael Hasenclever Gallery, Munich.
- 1989 Springer Gallery, Berlin.
- Michael Hansclever Gallery, Munich. Gardy-Wiechern Gallery, Hamburg. Metta Linde Gallery, Lubeck. Biennial of Venice. Joachim Becker Gallery, Cannes.
- 1991 La Teinturerie Gallery, Paris.
  Springer Gallery, Berlin.
  Tobias Hirschmann Gallery,
  Frankfort.
- Joachim Becker, Paris.Heynig-Dube Gallery, Munich.Buss Design, Ulm.
- 1993 National Library, Paris.
  Institute of Arab World, Paris.
  Tobias Hirschmann Gallery,
  Frankfort. Gardy Wiechern
  Gallery, Hamburg. Springer
  Gallery, Berlin. La Teitureie
  Gallery, Paris. Joachim Becker
  Gallery, Paris.
- Tobias Hirschmann Gallery, Frankfort. Gardy Wiechern Gallery, Hamburg. Atassi Gallery, Damascus. Springer Gallery, Berlin.

- \_ صالة Baumgarten ، فريبورغ .
  - ستوديو R ، مانهايم .
  - ۱۹۸۷ صالة Springer ، برلين
- . كان ، Joachim Becker ا
- \_ صالة Michael Hasenclever ، ميونيخ
  - ۱۹۸۹ صالة Springer ، برلين
- . Michael Hasenclever ميونيخ . ۱۹۹
- . ضالة Gardy Wiechern ، هامبورغ
  - \_ صالة Metta Linde ، لوبيك .
    - \_ بيينال البندقية .
  - . كان ، Jachim Becker ا
  - . La Colle sur Loup معرض
  - . La Teinturerie مالة الم ١٩٩١ ماريس .
    - \_ صالة Springer ، برلين .
- \_ صالة Tobias Hirschmann ، فرانكفورت
  - . سالة Jachim Becker ، باريس ۱۹۹۲
  - \_ صالة Heynig Dube ، ميونيخ .
    - \_ صالة Buss Design ، أولم .
      - ١٩٩٣ المكتبة الوطنية ، باريس .
    - \_ معهد العالم العربي ، باريس .
- \_ صالة Tobias Hirschmann ، فرانكفورت
- . فمبورغ ، Gardy Wiechern مامبورغ
  - \_ صالة Springer ، برلين .
  - صالة La Teinturerie ، باريس
  - \_ صالة Joachim Becker باريس
- . Tobias Hirschmann مرانكفورت . صالة
  - . ضالة Gardy Wiechern ، هامبورغ
    - \_ صالة أتاسي ، دمشق .
    - صالة Springer برلين

## أهم معارضه الفردية

- ۱۹۶۷ صالة Springer ، برلين .
- . Dr. Ammon الخاصة ، برلين . Dr. Ammon
  - ١٩٧٠ المركز الثقافي العربي ، دمشق .
    - ۱۹۷۱ صالة Lietzow ، برلين
    - \_ صالة Medici ، ميونيخ .
    - ۱۹۷۲ صالة Lietzow ، برلين
- \_ صالة Negendank الخاصة ، ترير .
- \_ صالة Dr. Tscheuschner ، فوبرتال
  - ۱۹۷۳ صالة Lietzow ، برلين
  - صالة Art 4'73 ، بازل .
  - \_ صالة Pudelko ، بون .
- ٠ ١٩٧٤ صالة Dr Kaulen الخاصة ، هانوفر .
  - \_ صالة Lietzow ، برلين .
  - ۰ ۱۹۷٥ \_ صالة Buchholz ، ميونيخ .
  - . نيويورك اصالة Gruenebaum ، نيويورك .
    - \_ صالة Lietzow ، برلين .
    - \_ إتحاد برلين الفني الجديد .
- \_ معرض شامل في قصر Charlottenbourg ، برلين .
  - . بریمن الله Kunstschau ، بریمن ۱۹۷۷
    - \_ صالة Pudelko ، بون .

- \_ جناح الحفر Karin Friebe ، دارمشتات .
  - \_ قاعة Kunstforum ، روتفايل .
    - ۱۹۷۸ صالة Lietzow ، برلين
  - . ١٩٨٠ \_ متحف الفن الحديث ، بغداد .
    - \_ صالة Lietzow ، برلين .
    - \_ صالة Marin ، هاغن .
- - ١٩٨٢ بيينال البندقية .
  - . برلين . Hartwig & Bethke
  - \_ صالة Timm Gierig ، فرانكفورت
    - ۱۹۸۳ شركة Overbeck ، لوبيك .
    - \_ صالة Metta Linde ، لوبيك .
      - \_ صالة Lietzow ، برلين .
      - ١٩٨٤ \_ قاعة المعارض ، دارمشتات .
    - . كان ، Joachim Becker ا
      - ه ۱۹۸۵ \_ صالة Ketterer ، ميونيخ .
        - \_ صالة Lietzow ، برلين .
    - . كان ، Joachim Becker ا
      - \_ قاعة FIAC'85 ، باريس .
  - ۱۹۸۲ صالة Timm Gierig ، فرانكفورت

يقع مرسمي في مواجهة الشمال، وله تسع نوافذ ومنها أرى اليوم والعالم. أرى شجرتي الحور أمام النافذة الأولى، وأرى براعم الربيع وأنتظر اخضرار أوراق الصيف، ثم يأتي الخريف ويتحول الاخضرار إلى ذهب ليحملني معه إلى صفوف أشجار الحور على سواقي بساتين دمشق، ولتحمل دورات الفصول أيامي وعمري.

تناجيني جارتي اليمامة عندما تحلق في السماء باسطة جناحيها كالشراع، أو واقفة ترتل: كريم كريم. أتوقف عن الرسم لأشبع عيني بها وارجع طفلاً أنظر إلى سماء دمشق ساعات العصر. لقد هاجر اليمام مثلي، من الشرق إلى الشمال واتخذ زوجاً منه شجرة المسك عشاً له تجاه نافذتي الوسطى.

تملأ سماء برلين الباردة، بين أيام الخريف المتأخر وبداية الربيع مع احمرار ساعات الغروب، أسراب الزاغ السوداء اللامتناهية باحثة بفجة عن مأواها الليلي أبّان رحلة الجنوب والشمال. أتأمل تلك الأسراب بتمهل وتعود بي لوحات فنسنت قان غوخ قبيل انتحاره بكل عظمتها كنور الوجود وأشعر بقوة الحياة والخلاص.

هناك كنيسة مجاورة لمرسمي تدق ساعتها معلنة هروب يوم آخر، تدق بانتظام لتقسم اليوم إلى شظايا: في الساعة الساحة النصف تقرع أجراس الكنيسة لدقائق، لتترك في نفسي وقعاً لايتغير، إشارة ونغماً يذكراني بموقعي من النهار وفيما إذا كانت بصيرتي ويداي تركت أثراً منيراً في أحد زوايا المرسم ذاك اليوم.

هذه بعض وقائع يومي، ترافقني وتشهد على سعي وانتظاري، ضعفي وتمردي، وتشهد على الأمل الذي ما ما يكاد يبدو ضائعاً وزائلاً حتى يعود بخط قلم أو بقعة لون من جديد إشارة لحياتي وربما فرحة للآخرين.

وعدي لمنى - برلين ٢ - ٢ - ١٩٩٥ مروان قصاب باشى

### المرسم الأول أو (في مخدع دمشقي)

كان الوقت بين العصر والغروب عندما دخلت غرفة الزمريق. كانت الستائر تظلل الغرفة، كما هي العادة في بيوت دمشق القديمة حفاظاً على البرودة أيام الصيف.

كان في منتصف الغرفة حامل عليه لوحة لمنظر بحر لازوردي يحمل أشرعة بيضاء، وعلى طرف اللوحة تلك الصخرة الشهيرة في بحر الشمال التي طالما رسمها الكثيرون من الانطباعيين وغيرهم، وإلى جانب الحامل كانت باليت عليها هضاب منتظمة من الألوان. كان للمخدع حرمة نادرة بسبب رائحة التربنتين، ثم ذلك النور العجيب الذي يشع من قناديل اللون المعطر.

شعرت برعشة ولذة عارمتين مع اندفاع روحي مليء بعاطفة غريبة. وددت أن أموت في تلك اللحظة المتكاملة حيث تلاقت السعادة والفرح بالأقطاب الأخرى من الحب والخلق في تصعيد نادر. لقد احتفظت بحضورية تلك اللحظة حتى الآن ولم أتوقف عن التجوال في بكر تلك الهضاب بما فيها من عطاء وامتناع.

كنت ابن ثلاثة عشر عاماً ذلك الوقت، وقد سألت الزمريق، وكان نساخاً أوقات الفراغ، من أين يحصل على تلك الألوان، فأجاب: من مكتبة الكزبري على طرف نهر بردى، ويكفيك الآن الأزرق والأحمر ثم الأصفر والأبيض مع فرشايتين.

كان ذلك (الشاطئ) الأول على نهر بردى وقد تركته متريثاً في رحلتي إلى شواطئ الشمال. «من رسالة لصديقي عبد الرحمن منيف في خريف ١٩٩٤».

